Permission to Tobacco Board to increase their staff strength

*320 SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to shortage of staff the Tobacco Board is unable to set up additional tobacco auction platforms in Andhra Pradesh despite increased tobacco crop size in the State:

(b) if so, whether Government will consider allowing Tabacco Board Increase their staff strength and set up more tabacco auction platforms with increased tabacco handling capacity; and

(c) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) The existing auction platforms are sufficient to market the authorised crop of tabacco. Proposals for setting up of additional auction platforms received from the Tabacco Board are considered and the Tabacco Board is allowed to set up additional auction platforms as and when found necessary. Normally, the additional platforms are operated by redeployment of existing staff of the Tobacco Board.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Extension of subsidy on capital loans to coffee growers

2267. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has extended five and three per cent interest subsidy to small and medium coffee growers respectively on working capital loans through the Coffee-Boards;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government would also like to extend the subsidy;

(d) if so, the time-frame set for this purpose;

(e) whether Government had also waived the old development loans and interest amounting to Rs. 64.50 crore availed by small coffee growers from the Coffee Board;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) what is the total financial benefit given to the coffee growers from the special package?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN)): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Government of India, as a part of the coffee package, is continuing the interest subsidy scheme on working capital loans availed by the growers from financial institutions at the rate of five and three per cent to small and large coffee growers respectively through the Coffee Board during the remaining period of the Tenth Plan period *viz.*, 2004-05 to 2006-07. The interest subsidy would be reduced by 1% for a period of 3 years in the case of those growers who receive the benefit of reduced interest burden on SCTL during the moratorium period.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. The Government of India is writing off coffee developmental loans along with interest amounting to around Rs. 24 crore, due from the Coffee Board to the Government of India—the Coffee Board will in turn waive the old developmental loans amounting to around Rs. 64.59 crore extended by the Board to the coffee growers having holding below 10 hectares only.

(g) The Government of India, besides the above benefits, under the "Coffee Package" has also provided the benefit of equal sharing of total interest burden estimated to be Rs. 287.10 crore on Special Coffee Term Loan (SCTL) during the three year moratorium period amongst the banks, the Government and the grower loanees to the extent of one-third each. It has also been decided to request banks to lower the interest rates charged on SCTL from existing 11% to 9% or rate applicable to agriculture sector whichever is lower, during the remaining repayment period of SCTL loans.

Import of iron-scrap

2268. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be please to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government allows import of scrap iron for use in steel plants;

(b) if so, what is the policy with regard to import duty on import of scrap iron for actual users in the country;